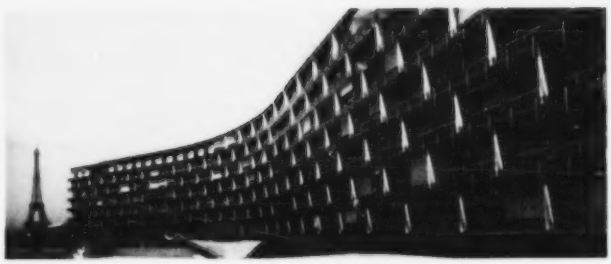
What is UNESCO?



UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is a Specialized Agency of the United Nations. It currently comprises 171 Member States (October 1992), compared with 20 at the time of its founding in 1946.

Formed to keep a watchful eye on developments in the world and help Member States find answers to the key problems that beset our societies in the areas within its competence, UNESCO is involved in a broad range of activities. Thus the term 'science' also covers areas belonging to both the social and human sciences, and although its acronym makes no mention of communication, UNESCO plays a crucial role in fields ranging from information exchange to the establishment of communication infrastructure.

UNESCO's Constitution says that 'since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'. Building these defences through international intellectual co-operation remains UNESCO's prime objective.

UNESCO also contributes to the translation of certain masterpieces of world literature and the recording of traditional music from all regions of the world, and participates in the prevention of drug abuse and AIDS through education programmes and through a centre set up to gather, assess and distribute educational material on AIDS prevention (ASERC – AIDS School Education Resource Centre – at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris).

Education

UNESCO/Dominique Roger

UNESCO gives top priority to its education programme, which consists of three interconnecting parts:

1. Towards basic education for all;
2. Education for the twenty-first century;
3. Action for progress in education.

The concept of **basic education for all** was defined by the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990. The programme aims to give everyone access to quality education that will lay the foundations for lifelong learning. It is up to each Member State to define such basic education in the light of its own cultural, social and economic values, while at the same time taking into account a common core of ideas that are universal in their application.

What kind of education should we provide for today's children, who will be living and working in the twenty-first century? This part of UNESCO's programme, designed to determine what kind of education should be given to children in order to prepare them for the increasingly interdependent and rapidly changing world they are about to enter, seeks to foster co-operation in order to adapt educational content and methodologies to society's needs in the decades to come.

Action for progress in education entails helping Member States, both by providing direct support and by facilitating international and regional co-operation, to develop effective policies and strategies and improve the management of the human and financial resources available to them.

Teacher training, access to education for girls and women, education for peace and international understanding, environmental education, education for AIDS prevention, nutritional education, scientific and technological education, vocational and technical education – these are some of the important aspects of education covered by the Organization, particularly under its 'Education for the twenty-first century' programme. Moreover, under the aegis of UNESCO, agreements on the promotion of the mobility of students and teachers through the recognition of their university diplomas have been adopted in all regions of the world.

The UNITWIN project for inter-university co-operation aims at supporting higher education in developing countries. Its main objective is to foster a sense of common purpose based on twinning, networking, and the establishment of subregional, regional and interregional co-operation agreements linking universities and scientific institutions throughout the world.

UNESCO publishes and distributes numerous periodicals, documents and books dealing with the various aspects of education, including the World Education Report, which first appeared in 1991 and which analyses major educational trends and policies in today's world.

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Science and Technology

UNESCO carries out a large number of environment-oriented scientific activities within the framework of its four intergovernmental programmes.

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) co-ordinates various branches of scientific research in an effort to arrive at a better understanding of the role of the ocean and its resources. It supports projects such as the 'World Climate Research Programme', and implements, in conjunction with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS).

The Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), launched in 1971, promotes international co-operation in the areas of research, training and dissemination of information concerning the conservation, development and management of terrestrial ecosystems and their resources. The MAB programme concentrates its efforts on activities concerned with the concept of sustainable development and the conservation of biological diversity.

Such activities are carried out more particularly in 'Biosphere Reserves' – protected areas representing the principal types of ecosystem – which serve as centres for conservation, development, research, demonstration, education, training, and ongoing biosphere monitoring. These reserves are organized into an international network which

constitutes a unique intergovernmental framework for the promotion of co-operation in this field. In 1992, the network featured 311 sites in 80 countries, which provide representative examples of approximately two-thirds of the world's land ecosystems.

The International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP), administered in collaboration with the International Union of Geological Sciences and supported by national committees in 92 countries, aims to improve knowledge in the field of geology, geophysics and distribution of mineral and energy resources. Fifty-nine projects are under way in developing countries worldwide as part of this programme.

The International Hydrological Programme (IHP) is designed to develop the scientific and technological bases of hydrology and to promote the rational management of water resources while keeping a strict eye on environmental protection. Its activities include study and research, as well as a large training section for hydrologists at every level.

The Organization's other scientific activities include those carried out as a part of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods and landslides), and the 'Programme to combat desertification and improve the management of arid lands'.

UNESCO is also intensifying its efforts to alert public opinion the world over to the dangers facing the environment. The **UNESCO-Chernobyl Programme**, for instance, is concerned with the consequences in the Ukraine, and in several neighbouring countries, of the accident that occurred in reactor No. 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power station.

Finally, the **'Science, Technology and Society' Programme** aims to enhance understanding of the connection between science and culture, and to remedy shortages of teaching equipment and information for out-of-school courses providing an introduction to science and technology.

Social and Human Sciences

UNESCO's activities in the field of the social and human sciences aim to promote teaching and research in these disciplines and to encourage their application to a number of priority issues for the Organization relating to education, development, urbanization, population, youth, human rights, democracy and peace. The social sciences constitute a link between the Organization's two main functions: international intellectual co-operation leading to reflection on major problems, and action to solve these problems.

For example, studies are conducted to elucidate the complex relations between demographic changes and socio-cultural transformation on a global scale. Co-operation with the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) has led to a technical assistance programme which benefits developing countries in the areas of population education and communication.

Other research activities concern modifications in the spatial distribution of populations (e.g. urbanization), the ways in which societies react to global climate and environmental change, and changes affecting women and families.

UNESCO's programme gives high priority to the problems of young people who are the first victims of unemployment, economic and social inequalities and the widening gap between developing and industrialized countries. Under the mobilizing project **'Youth Shaping the Future'**, an International Youth Clearing House and Information Service

will be established in order to build up the body of knowledge available on the situation of young people in society and to increase awareness of their needs, aspirations and potential among public and private decision-makers.

UNESCO's programme also focuses on the educational and cultural dimensions of physical education and sport and their capacity to preserve and improve health. It aims to combat marginalization and to encourage integration of young people in society. An activity specifically aimed at young people, for example, is education for the prevention of AIDS.

One of UNESCO's objectives related to the World Decade for Cultural Development is to ascertain that cultural and environmental dimensions are properly taken into consideration in development programmes and projects. The Organization also helps in defining national strategies and options for the development of human resources and strengthening national research and training capabilities in the area of future-oriented studies in order to better anticipate social, economic and cultural changes and their impact on development.

UNESCO's programme also focuses on the promotion of human rights and democracy through education, information and documentation, and research, particularly rights related to its fields of competence, i.e. education, science, culture and communication.

The struggle against all forms of discrimination is a central part of the Organization's programme. It disseminates scientific information aimed at combating racial prejudice, works to improve the status of women and their access to education, and promotes equality between men and women.

The Organization's action in favour of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), to which the international community has given high priority for the 1990s, has been boosted by the creation of an LDC Unit within the social and human sciences sector.

Culture

UNESCO

This programme has won public favour, particularly after the success of UNESCO-sponsored campaigns to save the Temples of Abu Simbel and Philae in Upper Egypt (22 temples have been saved) and at Borobudur in Indonesia, where a thousand-year-old Buddhist temple has been entirely rebuilt. At present, 24 campaigns are under way including one to save the historical city of Sana'a in Yemen and another to save the oldest city in the world, Mohenjo-Daro, in Pakistan.

UNESCO's projects to protect the world's natural and cultural heritage highlight the interdisciplinary nature of its approach. By December 1992, 132 countries had ratified the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. This Convention aims to preserve such outstanding sites and monuments as the Great Wall of China, the Kilimanjaro National Park, the Tower of London, Monticello and the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, and the Machu Picchu historical reserve. These are but a few of the 378 sites mentioned in 1992 on the World Heritage List, which grows every year as more are added to it on the recommendation of the World Heritage Committee.

Within the framework of the **'World Decade for Cultural Development'** (1988-1997), UNESCO has set itself the goal

of increasing and enhancing the recognition of the cultural and environmental dimensions of development in its development programmes and projects. As a part of this Decade, UNESCO has launched the **'Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue'**. This vast project consists in studying the land and sea routes which linked East and West and along which passed foods or goods such as spices, wine, silks, china, precious stones and perfumes. These routes promoted important cultural, scientific and technological exchanges and acted as bridges between many civilizations. Other intercultural projects pursued in connection with the Decade, such as the **'Commemoration of the Five-Hundredth Anniversary of the Encounter Between Two Worlds'**, the **Baroque World** and the **'Maya World'**, are all designed to enhance awareness of the mutually enriching interaction that is possible between cultures.

UNESCO is playing an active role in the revival of the ancient **Library of Alexandria** in Egypt. A centre of learning in antiquity, the Alexandria Library-Museum, founded around 295 B.C. by Ptolemy I, was entirely destroyed by fire in the war waged against Alexandria by Julius Caesar. The new library, designed by a group of Norwegian architects, will be in the form of a giant slanting disc evoking a sunrise over the Mediterranean.

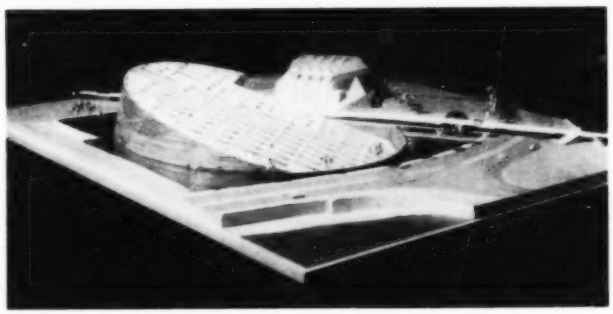
UNESCO also works actively to support the preservation of oral tradition, the promotion of books and reading and international copyright protection. The Organization sponsored the **Universal Copyright Convention (1952)**, and the sign © is now used to protect books all over the world.

UNESCO has also launched a series of innovative activities at regional level to promote the performing arts in Africa and the fine arts in Latin America. International programmes are currently under way in the area of crafts, audiovisual production, artistic exchange networks and the protection of artists and craftworkers. In a similar vein to UNESCO's Collection of Traditional Music, which has received worldwide acclaim, a collection of videodisks on traditional performing arts is currently in preparation.

In the field of literature, **UNESCO's Collection of Representative Works**, founded in 1948, fosters a wider

international appreciation of the world literary heritage by encouraging the translation and publication – mainly in English and French – of literature written in less widely spoken languages.

Communication, Information and Informatics



UNESCO/Sbeba Arkitektur

'To promote the free flow of ideas by word and image' is one of UNESCO's primary objectives, as set out in its Constitution. The Organization works in support of press freedom, pluralism, independence and diversity of both public and private media. Along similar lines, it is actively helping developing countries to enhance their means of communication and to apply new communication technologies so that they have a chance to make their voice heard internationally.

The main instrument used in project selection and funding is the **'International Programme for the Development of Communication' (IPDC)**, which was set up in 1980 and is financed through voluntary contributions. IPDC has successfully set up several national and regional news agencies under the sponsorship of such projects as ALASEI (Latin America), CANA (Caribbean), WANAD (West Africa), CANAD (Central Africa) and SEANAD (Southern and East Africa). Several community radio stations and rural newspapers have begun operating, and training centres for professional communication experts have been upgraded, to encourage the freedom and independence of the media.

In order to launch and supervise these projects, UNESCO gathers contributions in the form of funds-in-trust, which amount to some 12 million US dollars per biennium, in addition to five million dollars allocated from the IPDC Special Account. Since 1985, an IPDC-UNESCO Prize for Rural Communication, worth $20,000, has been awarded every two years.

The General Information Programme (PGI) is the focal point of the Organization's activities designed to create and strengthen information, documentation, library and archives services in Member States.

It specifically aims to increase the capacities of the developing countries to organize, disseminate and utilize information received from the outside.

In this way, the Programme seeks to facilitate the development of policies and planning with regard to information, libraries and archives; promote the application of international standards; provide training for specialists; set up specialized information networks; and strengthen and update library and archives services in Member States.

Acting on the premise that, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, access to information technologies is crucial for achieving sustainable development, UNESCO was the first United Nations agency to develop an **'International Informatics Programme' (IIP)**, the purpose of which is to train computer specialists and reduce the inequalities in this field between industrialized and developing countries.

Since 1989, IIP has participated in over 50 projects with training as their central theme. Another focal point of UNESCO's action in the area of informatics is 'Informafrica', aimed at applying informatics to development within the framework of the 'Priority: Africa' programme, which has established a schedule of priority activities and innovative national projects likely to attract external financing with a view to bringing sustainable development to all African countries.

How does UNESCO work?

The General Conference, which brings together the representatives of the 171 Member States every two years, lays down the Organization's programme. These same States provide the funds for the biennial budget ($444,704,000 in 1992-93) required for the programme's execution. The Executive Board, composed of 51 members, supervises the programme's implementation by the Organization's Secretariat.

The staff of the Secretariat, representing more than 130 nationalities, is based at Headquarters in Paris and in the field. The Organization's Executive Head is the Director-General. This post is filled by Mr Federico Mayor Zaragoza (Spain), who was elected in November 1987 for a six-year term.

As of 1992, one hundred and fifty-eight Member States had set up National Commissions for UNESCO, each with a task of involving the country's educational, scientific, cultural and communication circles, as well as its main institutions, in UNESCO's work. As organs of liaison, information, discussion and implementation, the National Commissions bring out publications, ensure the country's participation in international programmes, arrange seminars and make UNESCO's ideals known. In addition, 138 Member States have established permanent delegations to the Organization, in Paris.

Over 585 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) maintain working and mutual information relations with UNESCO. The NGOs, which have national branches in many countries, bring together people directly concerned with UNESCO's programme, e.g. educators, scientists, artists, authors, librarians, museologists, computer specialists, journalists, publishers, etc.

What does UNESCO publish?

UNESCO's publications are regarded as important instruments of its programme: they inform the public about its activities and achievements. Such publications include periodicals, documents, specialist journals and reviews intended for the general public.

The monthly magazine *The UNESCO Courier*, published in thirty-six different languages and in Braille, deals with main themes of universal interest, viewed from a variety of cultural standpoints by authors from different countries and informs on the progress of research and the activities of the Organization.

UNESCO Sources, published in French, English, Portuguese and Spanish, is distributed free of charge, and provides a monthly report on the Organization's main activities.

Specialist journals such as *Prospects* (a quarterly journal on education), *Museum*, the *International Social Science Journal*, *Impact of Science on Society*, *Nature and Resources*, the *Copyright Bulletin* and the *Bulletin of the International Bureau of Education* are all valuable sources of information.

Many publications designed to be both thought-provoking and informative are available in several languages; these include the *Statistical Yearbook*, the *Index Translationum* (an international bibliography of translations), *Study Abroad*, *International Law: achievement and prospects* and the *World Communication Report*.

In addition, the *General History of Africa* in eight volumes, several of which have already been published in a number of different languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, Japanese, Italian) is also available in the most widely spoken African languages, such as Hausa and Kiswahili.

Other historical publications are in preparation , including a history of Latin America and the Caribbean, a history of Central Asia, a work on the various aspects of Islamic culture, and an updated edition of the *History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of Mankind*.

Moreover, fourteen books in French have already been published in the new *World Heritage Series*; each is devoted to a cultural or natural site appearing on the World Heritage List; twenty-three have been published in Spanish, and others in English are scheduled for publication shortly.

UNESCO also places atlases and scientific charts at the disposal of specialists all over the world.

A free catalogue of UNESCO publications in English, French and Spanish is available on request from:

UNESCO Publishing, Promotion and Sales Division,
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 PARIS 07 SP
Tel. (1) 45.68.10.00. Telex: 204461 Paris
Fax: (1) 42.73.30.07

The Organization's periodicals are distributed through its Subscription Services:

1, rue Miollis, 75732 PARIS CEDEX 15
Tel.: (1) 45.68.45.64/65. Telex: 204461 Paris
Fax: (1) 42.73.30.07

Publications charts and atlases can also be ordered in each country from UNESCO sales agents, whose names and addresses are listed in the publications catalogue.

How to support UNESCO's action

To achieve its objectives, UNESCO needs the help of people throughout the world. Various options are open to those who wish to establish a working relationship with UNESCO and support it. They include:

- promoting the UNESCO Club movement (consisting of 3,700 clubs) whose aim is to involve the public in the activities of the Organization and the United Nations;
- encouraging the development of UNESCO Associated Schools, set up to foster a spirit of international understanding in young people;
- participating in UNESCO's Co-Action Programme which, each year, provides financial assistance to some 90 rural development projects in the poorest countries of the world;
- supporting the non-governmental organizations contributing to the various aspects of UNESCO's programme;
- taking out a subscription to a UNESCO periodical and making it known;
- paying a group visit to UNESCO House in Paris and attending a free information programme;
- taking the initiative in celebrating the official International Days proclaimed by the United Nations (for example, Women's Day on 8 March, Press Freedom Day on 3 May, Literacy Day on 8 September and Human Rights Day on 10 December).

For further information, please contact:

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